



LESSONS LEARNED RECORD OF INTERVIEW

Project Title and Code:			
LL-03 – U.S. Perception and Responses to Corruption in Afghanistan			
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(b)(5)			
Interviewees: (Either list interviewees below, attach sign-in sheet to this document or hyperlink to a file)			
SIGAR Attendees:			
Jim Wasserstrom (Strategic Advisor and Project Lead) and Brittany Gates (Research Analyst)			
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Prepared By: (Name, title and date)			
Brittany Gates, Research Analyst – 12/15/2015			
Reviewed By: (Name, title and date)			
Key Topics:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with warlords, warlord economy, and criminal patronage networks Role of Pakistan and Iraq Counterterrorism, nation-building, and COIN (b)(3) and looking at the political environment 			

US in Afghanistan 2001

There was an overwhelming sense to establish security and reestablishing order was a priority. Having the new government free of corruption was not high in priority or in scope. From 2001-2003 we did wonder where al Qaeda went after Tora Bora. The Bonn process occurred and came up with a minimal degree of a political process with Karzai as the head. Jim Dobbins had a hard enough task just trying to put something together at this time. There were no requests for assessments concerning corruption. By the time you get to 2003, this other war gets into everything that went into the South Asia offices and Afghanistan ended up being knocked



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down. [There was a reality that multiple centers of power and [having] one center of power have control over [the other] centers (like economic governance).]

Commented [BG1]: Jim do you remember what he meant here?

Warlords and Iraq

The creation of the warlords [entailed] reaching out with a lot of deals with local power centers. The "Warlord Strategy" was about co-opting warlords and bringing those people into the center; that was part of the strategy. These power structures were always and still in place; money changing hands occurs out of the center. Most of 2000 was focused in South Asia and Afghanistan focused (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) security emphasis stuff for it prior to 9/11. Operation Enduring Freedom was military supported and then the war in Iraq sub-served anything else. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) should have been split because Afghanistan was not getting as much attention as it should have [once we focused on Iraq]. We assessed the warlords in terms of the most recent deal they [warlords] had cut so long as it was in our [US] favor. We can't change what the warlords do, but we can make sure that what they are doing is in our favor.

Taliban and Pakistan

When the Taliban swept into power with Pakistani support, highlighted Pakistan's agenda of obtaining its allies against the Indians. Getting and buying the influence of the Taliban was their main deal. Pakistan pursuing its own agenda was a factor that did not help us.

Counterterrorism Trumps All

It's true that counterterrorism trumped, but it's also a matter of priorities. Whatever was applied to working with actors meant that the counterterrorism mandate was high. [If one is higher of course ____] The whole reason why did we counterterrorism was in response to the terrorist attack we faced. We are supposed to be there for the terrorists, not for a country [we are trying] to improve. It was for a specific reason that was the overall priority. [It was] inevitable for corruption to be the existential threat. In practical terms there was an inevitability. Trying to change the habits and culture would have been difficult to begin with. [We] should have recognized that our mission transitioned to a nation-building exercise. As soon as we got into a nation-building exercise, then we should have changed our tactics. Anti-corruption ought to have been a higher priority other than "what is this warlord going to do?" [We should have] recognized we changed and reassess our priorities. [There was an inflection point that] occurred in 2003 and what we could do to resist a resurgent presence. [When it came to warlords enabling impunity] it's realistically hard to change habits and patterns. If we wanted to try harder, there would have been more resources put in.

Commented [BG2]: Jim I didn't catch this last part, I think he said that it would be the one to trump.

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

Having an Exit Strategy with Warlords

That [an exit strategy] gets more difficult. The argument you would get back is that we need his cooperation for x, y, and z. It would be more useful to disengage after they serve their purpose. It could look sort of like a



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presidential waiver or as a way to revisit the relationship for a specific period of time. It could be something that the NSC uses as leverage. But using these people, that's a reality.

Drawing Comparisons to Iraq

There are many cross-theater lessons to be drawn. Taking stock of what worked and what didn't is good; it's not seen as a negative thing. Petraeus saw it and knew it.

Parameters of Success for COIN

If you are faced with an insurgency and you are doing something about it, then that is COIN. It's nothing new, it's a long-standing doctrine. COIN is what it takes to have a population be at opposite of the insurgency. [Look at] how the population sees its better quality of life. If it's with the Taliban, then we [Afghans] will go with them or if the government aids and assists us [Afghans], then we will go with them. Our going into COIN happened early on despite the counterterrorism mandate. It was an inertia; we slid into it.